

**Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, December 9, 2011**

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### Action Item Calendar

**Today** (December 9): [Textbook reimbursement](#) forms due

**Today** (December 9): Weekly status update on Teacher-Course-Student data collection due

**Tuesday** (December 13) : Deadline for corrections to [Asset Protection Plans](#)

December 16: [Technology Capacity](#) Survey due

December 21: Deadline to complete survey on Teacher of the Year (see below)

December 23: Presidential Scholars nominations due

January 6, 2012: Costs report on special education due (see below)

June 30, 2012: Schools and districts submit [final personnel assignments](#)

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#### *Notes from Commissioner Gist:*

#### **1. Rhode Island Foundation to award fellowships to develop, implement innovative ideas to improve life in Rhode Island**

You may have heard that the Rhode Island Foundation is planning to award Rhode Island Innovation Fellowships to “stimulate solutions by Rhode Islanders to Rhode Island challenges.” The Rhode Island Innovation Fellows will receive up to \$300,000 over three years “to develop, test, and implement innovative ideas that have the potential to dramatically improve any area of life in Rhode Island.”

The Rhode Island Foundation has a strong history of supporting our efforts to transform education in Rhode Island, and I think it would be very exciting if one (or more!) of the Innovation Fellows were from the education field. I would love to see proposals that could advance our work on such initiatives as virtual learning, STEM to STEAM, or any of the many other initiatives that can help us improve our schools and advance the achievement of our students. Perhaps RIDE could even offer technical support for an Innovation Fellow focused on education.

I hope you will bring this opportunity to the attention of anyone you may know who has a vision for transforming education. I would be glad to discuss ideas for innovation with anyone interested in applying for this fellowship. More information on the Innovation Fellowships is available here:

<http://www.rifoundation.org/CommunityInitiatives/RhodeIslandInnovationFellowship/tabid/1002/Default.aspx>

Please note that the deadline for the initial phase of the application process is December 23.

## **2. Nominations sought for Presidential Scholars – Action Item**

We would like your help in identifying nominees for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. The U.S. Department of Education established this prestigious program in 1964, and to date the program has recognized more than 6,000 outstanding high-school seniors and honored them for their high achievement.

The Department selects Presidential Scholars on the basis of their “outstanding scholarship and promise of future success.” In the past, students have been invited to apply for the program solely on the basis of their SAT or ACT scores. This year, however, the Commission on Presidential Scholars has expanded the nominee pool by inviting each state to nominate one male and one female student who demonstrate outstanding scholarship and might otherwise be overlooked for this award.

I am hoping that you can identify an outstanding high-school student in your LEA who would be an excellent candidate to be one of the Presidential Scholars from Rhode Island. All high-school seniors graduating between January and June of 2012 who are U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents, including students in nonpublic schools and students who are schooled at home, are eligible. We are particularly interested in receiving nominations of students who have disabilities or who are English-language learners.

Please nominate only one student from your district. Please send your nominee’s name, home mailing address, and high-school name, along with that student’s resume (or a suitable substitute) and the student’s Common Application college essay (or a suitable substitute) no later than **December 23** to [Hayley.Jamroz@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Hayley.Jamroz@ride.ri.gov).

RIDE will choose one male and one female student from the pool of nominees to send to the U.S. Department of Education for consideration. We are trying to keep to a minimum the burden on you and on our students at this time of year, but we are on a tight deadline for submitting nominations. If you have any questions, please contact Hayley Jamroz at the e-mail address above or at 222-8690.

For more information on the program, please visit the Department [website](#).

## **3. Race to the Top “Moving Forward Together” meeting scheduled for Tuesday at Sheraton Airport Hotel**

I hope you will be able to join us on **Tuesday** (December 13) for our next Race to the Top “Moving Forward Together” meeting. The meeting will be held at the Sheraton Airport Hotel, 1850 Post Rd., Warwick, from 4:30 - 6:30 p.m. We have invited all superintendents, school-committee and school-board chairs, local teachers’ union presidents, and charter-school representatives to attend this meeting. Please remind and encourage your committee or board chair and the union leader from your LEA to attend with you.

At this meeting, RIDE will present information about the Instructional Management System and about our request for flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/NCLB. In addition, a panel of educators from across the state will discuss the ongoing

implementation of educator evaluations, and there will be plenty of time for general questions and answers. We have developed the agenda for this meeting in partnership with RISSA, RIASC, AFTHP, NEARI, and the Rhode Island League of Charter Schools.

If you have questions about this meeting, you may contact Nicole Shaffer, at [nicole.shaffer@ride.ri.gov](mailto:nicole.shaffer@ride.ri.gov).

**From RIDE:**

**4. Superintendents asked to complete survey on Teacher of the Year – Action Item**

Please see this request from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Superintendents are asked to complete a [4-question survey](#) regarding Teacher of the Year. As Commissioner Gist recently shared with the RISSA Executive Committee, RIDE is adjusting the annual timeline for the state Teacher of the Year program and hoping to add some new opportunities and prizes for future winners. In order to inform our thinking on the timeline, please complete this short survey on your district's current practices related to Teacher of the Year:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/6CGVTN7>

We will share more information regarding the revamped process in early 2012. We ask you to please complete this survey by December 21.

**5. Principals, special-education directors asked to meet with teachers to review Alternate Assessments**

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

During the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment (RIAA) Administrators Workshops this summer, several datafolio review strategies were presented for principals and special-education directors to use to help further their understanding of the RIAA and the datafolios so as to be able to provide assurances that the assessment was administered appropriately when they sign the Test Affirmation and Security form. We believe that making time for these reviews will increase understanding of how the RIAA datafolios were administered and the work involved in gathering evidence as well as identifying any areas of concern or needs for additional support.

November 17 was the last day of the first collection period (testing window) for the RIAA, and teachers should have completed the first phase of assessments. We encourage all principals and special-education directors to make plans to meet with teachers in your schools to discuss and review *at least one datafolio entry* for each student taking the RIAA. The strategies for conducting various types of reviews and questions to discuss regarding datafolios can be found in the Administrators Workshop presentation and on the back of the bookmarks distributed at the Administrators Workshop for the RIAA this summer. You can also access these materials by clicking [here](#):

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/assessment/Altassessment.aspx>.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Heather Heineke at 222-8493, [heather.heineke@ride.ri.gov](mailto:heather.heineke@ride.ri.gov) or Becky Wright at 222-8404 or [Becky.Wright@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Becky.Wright@ride.ri.gov).

This notification will be sent electronically to all principals and special-education directors on Monday (December 12).

#### **6. Webinar on validity and reliability in assessments scheduled for Wednesday**

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

The Comprehensive Assessment System webinar series will continue on **Wednesday** (December 14), from 9:30 - 10:30 a.m., with a webinar on validity and reliability. The webinar will define validity and reliability, as they pertain to educational assessment, and it will help participants think through how to make valid inferences from assessment data. To register, please visit:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/assessment/CAS.aspx>

#### **7. Districts asked to contact SchoolSpring to discuss Web-based support for recruiting educators**

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

One of the pieces of our Race to the Top grant is a statewide, Web-based recruiting tool that will allow school districts and the RIDE to attract the best educators to Rhode Island. RIDE has contracted with SchoolSpring, Inc., as the vendor to develop this recruiting tool. RIDE, through our Race to the Top grant, will be funding the SchoolSpring RIDE package for all districts. We do realize that some of our districts have purchased the more robust package SchoolSpring Complete. Districts will need to work with our SchoolSpring representative, Lisa Barden, to discuss any additional costs there may be to the district to continue with the same level of service.

An information and training session was held for all human-resource directors and designees on November 15. Lisa Barden was able to answer many questions, and she provided critical information on the system. Districts can work with Lisa to register for the service as well as to set up further training.

Please have your human-resources director contact Lisa Barden, at [Lisa@SchoolSpring.com](mailto:Lisa@SchoolSpring.com) or 1-781-595-4140, to discuss your recruiting needs and the package that will best support your district.

As always, if you have any questions or feedback, do not hesitate to contact Hilda Potrzeba, at [hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov](mailto:hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8891.

Thank you for your support and dedication in hiring the best educators for all schools in Rhode Island.

**8. Reminder to submit weekly status update today for the Teacher-Course-Student (TCS) Milestone Tracking via eRIDE- *Action Item***

Please see this notice from our Division of Fiscal Integrity and Efficiencies:

As a reminder, all LEAs are being asked to submit weekly status updates regarding readiness to move forward with Teacher-Course-Student (TCS) data collection. These weekly updates are due Fridays at 6 p.m. via the TCS Milestone Tracking module on eRide, which can be accessed at [www.eride.ri.gov](http://www.eride.ri.gov). Your LEA's completion of the status updates will help RIDE to better support districts to plan for TCS data collection, which begins on January 3, 2012, and to respond quickly to any specific issues LEAs are experiencing in the TCS data-collection efforts.

A few notes on completing the module in eRIDE:

- Please make sure the "Actual Date of Completion" is entered for all completed milestones and that the "Expected Date of Completion" is entered for all milestones that have not been completed yet.
- This tracking tool is applicable to all LEAs that have any students in grades 3 through 7 (including charters and state-operated schools). Regardless of the type of data-management method you use, it needs to be compatible with the TCS file-submission requirements. If your LEA does not use a formal student-information system (e.g., Excel), you should still answer the status questions on the eRIDE module; just adapt the language that references SIS vendors to reflect your internal Excel-spreadsheet management process.

Please make sure that your LEA's information is updated in the "TCS Milestone Tracking" module on eRide by 6 p.m. **today** (Friday, December 9). If you have any questions, please contact Betty Landry, at [elizabeth.landry@ride.ri.gov](mailto:elizabeth.landry@ride.ri.gov).

**9. Common Core State Standards flier available for distribution**

Please see the following announcement from Our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

We are pleased to share a new communication tool with you. RIDE has created a flier for public use that has active links to all of our Common Core resource pages.

The flier can be e-mailed to your educators and community partners, or printed as handouts. It is available here:

[www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/DOCS/CommonCore/CCSS\\_Announcement\\_Flier-PRINT.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/DOCS/CommonCore/CCSS_Announcement_Flier-PRINT.pdf)

We encourage you to share this with all of your staff to support our transition to the Common Core. For easy access to resources, consider adding a link directly to our Transition page ([www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/transition.aspx](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/transition.aspx)) on your LEA's Web site.

#### **10. SurveyWorks! micro-website to go live on Tuesday**

Please see this notice from our Office of Data, Analysis, and Research:

On Tuesday (December 13), a new SurveyWorks! micro-website, <http://www.surveyworks.ride.ri.gov>, will go live. This site will be a one-stop source where parents, teachers, and administrators can get information about the survey, access previous results and, during the survey-administration window, take the survey itself. Site coordinators for each school will also be able to get all of the tools that they need to support survey implementation.

As a reminder, the schedule for the survey is:

Site Coordinator webinars: Today (December 9), Monday December 12), Wednesday (December 14), and December 20 (to be archived on the site)  
Opportunity for parents to opt students out of survey: January 5 - 19, 2012  
Parent Survey: January 5 - February 16, 2012  
Student Survey: January 30 - March 15, 2012  
Teacher/Staff Survey: January 30 - March 15, 2012  
Administrator Survey: January 30-March 15, 2012

Thank you for your ongoing support of SurveyWorks! and for the hard work that you and your staff members do to make these surveys a success.

Please contact the SurveyWorks! Team with any questions, at 1-877-787-5725 or [surveyworks@wested.org](mailto:surveyworks@wested.org).

#### **11. Reports on high-cost, low-incidence special education due January 6, 2012 – Action Item**

Please see the following notice from our Offices of Statewide Efficiencies and Student, Community, and Academic Supports:

School-business managers and special-education administrators have been asked to submit a report on high-cost, low-incidence special education. Information from these reports will be used to support the Regents' budget request to fund the High Cost Special Education Categorical Fund. This fund would reimburse LEAs for costs in excess of \$60,753 per student. The report is due January 6, 2012. It is imperative that we have accurate and timely data to support this request. Superintendents are asked to ensure that this information is submitted by the deadline so that the LEA is eligible for reimbursement if funding is received. In the future, this annual collection will take place when school gets underway in September in order to allow additional time for LEAs to submit their data.

## **12. Rhode Island Model toolkit now available on line**

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

The second toolkit of materials (Staff Meeting in a Box #2) designed to help school and district leaders provide training for teachers about the Rhode Island Model for educator evaluations is now available on the RIDE Web site. Topics covered in Staff Meeting in a Box #2 include the observation process, rubrics, collecting evidence, feedback, and mid-year conferences.

To download the PowerPoint (with detailed presenter's notes), and a principals' agenda, please visit our Training Resources page, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/Training.aspx>

## **13. Next round of training for evaluators to begin in March**

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

As of this week, Modules 1 and 2 for Personnel Evaluating Building Administrators and Modules 1 through 3 for Personnel Evaluating Teachers are complete. As part of our plan to strategically align the trainings with the various stages of implementation, the next round of Module trainings will begin in March and will focus on preparing for end-of-year conferences. Thank you for your continued investment in the evaluation trainings, and please check the Educator Evaluation Web page often for additional information and resources. To register for Module 3 for Personnel Evaluating Building Administrators or Module 4 for Personnel Evaluating Teachers, go to the eRIDE Workshop calendar, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ridecalendar.aspx>.

## **14. Superintendents asked to select two contacts to work on Instructional Management System – *Action Item***

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

At long last, RIDE has begun the building of the Instructional Management System. This online system will provide a systematic, coherent, and ongoing combination of curriculum (including standards), instruction, and assessment to support student achievement.

The system will:

- align curriculum, instruction, and assessments to support student achievement;



- manage and access curricular, instructional, professional-development, and student-support materials;
- access relevant and timely visual reporting of assessment and other data (“dashboards”) for immediate student, class, school, and district needs;
- query data to determine areas of student strengths and needs while being able to track student progress so that learning gaps do not form or widen;
- provide access to professional-development modules around formative-assessment strategies;
- include an RTI-management module that allows teachers and administrators to fully manage and administrate implementation plans and track student progress toward goals; and
- design, distribute, and score assessments (will not include the PARCC or RIAA assessments).

There is much to do for districts to prepare for implementing the IMS. Its development has just begun, but we know how important it is to identify the key people who will be the points of contact in your LEA. To plan for the upcoming meeting, please identify *two* people from your LEA. The IMS is a complex system with extensive data requirements and requires a deep understanding of curriculum and how it is used in your LEA and any LEA plans to share curricula across districts.

*District Contact Information:* Please send the following information to Jasmine Rezendes, from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum, at [jasmine.rezendes@ride.ri.gov](mailto:jasmine.rezendes@ride.ri.gov):

district name, name, e-mail, phone number, and position of each of the two people.

*Person One will:* Understand and be involved in technology capacities and data management districtwide.

*Person Two will:* Understand and be involved in districtwide curriculum development

The first meeting will be on January 13, 2012. The time and location are still being determined. Additional statewide meetings and information are also being developed. As information becomes available, we will distribute it via the Field Memo.

For more information about the IMS, please contact Bob Measel ([Robert.Measel@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Robert.Measel@ride.ri.gov)) or Heather Heineke ([Heather.Heineke@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Heather.Heineke@ride.ri.gov)).

***From the U.S. Department of Education:***

### **15. Departments of Education, Justice issue guidance on race and diversity**

Please see this notice from the Office of Communications and Outreach:

On December 2, the Departments of Justice and Education released two guidance documents -- one for school districts and one for colleges and universities -- detailing the flexibility that the Supreme Court has provided to educational institutions to

promote diversity and, in the case of K-12 schools, reduce racial isolation among students, within the confines of the law. This guidance makes clear that educators may permissibly consider the race of students in carefully constructed plans to promote diversity or reduce racial isolation. It also recognizes the learning benefits to students when institutions include students of diverse backgrounds. The guidance is primarily based on three Supreme Court decisions that specifically addressed the consideration of race by institutions. It provides numerous examples of options that schools, colleges, and universities can consider to further diversify or reduce racial isolation. For K-12 schools, the guidance discusses school and program siting, drawing school attendance boundaries, grade realignment, and restructuring feeder patterns, among other options. For more information, see:

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201111.html>.

#### **16. Department issues amended regulations on family rights and privacy**

Please see this notice from the Family Policy Compliance Office:

The U.S. Department of Education has released final regulations amending the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) regulations. You can view the notice at:

[http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2011-30683\\_PI.pdf](http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2011-30683_PI.pdf).

The regulations were published in the *Federal Register* tomorrow, Friday, December 2. These regulations are effective January 3, 2012. The Department has issued a press release announcing the publication, which you can view at:

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-education-department-announces-new-measures-safeguard-student-privacy>.

Please visit the Department's Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO) Web site (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/>) to view important documents that are being released with the new regulations, including "Guidance for Reasonable Methods and Written Agreements" and updated model notifications for LEA and postsecondary officials.

We hope you will find the preamble discussion in the regulations, as well as the accompanying guidance documents, helpful. Should you have any questions about the issues raised in these final regulations, you may email the FPCO at [FERPA@ed.gov](mailto:FERPA@ed.gov).

#### **17. Department report finds schools serving low-income students are "shortchanged" on funding**

Please see this notice from the Office of Communications and Outreach:

A new report from the Department's Policy and Program Studies Service (PPSS) analyzing school-level spending and teacher salary data documents that schools serving low-income students are being shortchanged because many school districts across the

country are inequitably distributing their state and local funding. This first-time ever national data collection on school-level expenditure data -- required by the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (ARRA) and submitted by over 13,000 districts for the 2008-09 school year -- reveals that many high-poverty schools receive less than their fair share of state and local funding, leaving them with fewer resources than schools attended by wealthier students. Indeed, more than 40 percent of schools that received federal Title I money to serve disadvantaged students spent less state and local funding on teachers and other personnel than schools that did not receive Title I money at the same grade level in the same district. For more information, see:

<http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/title-i/school-level-expenditures/school-level-expenditures.pdf>.

The Administration's Blueprint for Reform of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) would amend the Title I comparability provision to ensure that state and local funding is more equitably distributed between Title I and non-Title I schools. For more information, see:

<http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/title-i/comparability-requirement/comparability-policy-brief.pdf>.

***RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:***

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>